

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 MCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 IO-13 SSM-03 ACDA-12 OMB-01 TRSE-00
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R 200859Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY BERLIN
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6962
INFO AMEMBASSY WARSAW
AMEMBASSY BELGRADE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST
AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY PRAGUE
AMEMBASSY SOFIA
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
USMISSION USBERLIN
USMISSION USNATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BERLIN 01968

E.O.11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PGOV, GE
SUBJECT: YASSAR ARAFAT VISITS GDR

1. SUMMARY. YASSAR ARAFAT MADE TWO -DAY VISIT
TO EAST BERLIN DURING WHICH TIME HE MET WITH HONECKER
AND HELD POLITICAL TALKS WITH POLITBURO MEMBER
GRUENEBERG. ALTHOUGH THERE APPEARS TO BE SOME
DIFFERENCES ON POLICY ISSUES, ALL INDICATIONS ARE
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THAT BILATERAL RELATIONS BETWEEN THE GDR AND THE
PLO ARE GOOD AND ARE LIKELY TO DEVELOP FURTHER.
END SUMMAR-.

2. YASSAR ARAFAT, LEADING A PLO DELEGATION,
VISITED EAST BERLIN MARCH 10 AND 11.
ARAFAT MET WITH PARTY CHIEF HONECKER AND HAD

TALKS WITH POLITBURO MEMBER GERHARD GRUENEBERG.
THE ONLY OTHER MEMBER OF ARAFAT'S ENTOURAGE PUBLICLY
IDENTIFIED WAS FAROUK KADDOUMI, MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE OF THE PLO AND HEAD OF THE POLITICAL
DEPARTMENT. IN ADDITION TO SUBSTANTIVE TALKS, ARAFAT
GAVE A PRESS CONFERENCE (FOR EAST GERMAN JOURNALISTS)
AND VISITED WITH THE STAFF OF THE PLO PERMANENT OFFICE
IN EAST BERLIN.

3. A JOINT PRESS RELEASE WAS ISSUED AT THE END OF THE
VISIT CONTAINING FAMILIAR POSITIONS ON MIDDLE EAST
ISSUES. (WE ASSUME DEPARTMENT HAS TEXT.) THE GDR AND THE
PLO DEMAND THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI TROOPS FROM
ALL ARAB AND PALESTINIAN AREAS OCCUPIED IN 1967, THE
ENSURING OF THE INALIENABLE NATIONAL RIGHTS OF THE
ARAB PEOPLE OF PALESTINE, INCLUDING THE RIGHTS TO
RETURN TO THEIR HOMELAND, SELF-DETERMINATION, AND THE
CREATION OF AN INDEPENDENT STATE AS PROVIDED IN THE UN
RESOLUTION. SPECIAL EMPHASIS WAS LAID ON THE NEED
FOR GREATER COOPERATION AMONG ALL PROGRESSIVE NATIONAL
ARAB FORCES AND STRENGTHENING THEIR TIES WITH THE USSR
AND THE OTHER SOCIALIST STATES.

4. SOME APPARENT DIFFERENCES IN POSITIONS SHOWED UP.
THE GDR PRAISED THE CONFERENCE OF PROGRESSIVE ARAB
STATES IN TRIPOLI AND IN ALGIERS FOR STRENGTHENING
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UNITY IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST IMPERIALISM, ZIONISM AND
REACTION. THE PLO REMAINED PUBLICLY SILENT ON THESE
TWO MEETINGS. GRUENEBERG, IN HIS TOAST AT AN OFFICIAL
DINNER STATED THAT AMONG OTHER OBJECTIVES ALL STATES
IN THE REGION SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENCE
AND SECURITY. THIS POINT WAS NOT REFLECTED IN THE JOINT
PRESS RELEASE. THE JOINT PRESS RELEASE CONTAINS NO
DIRECT REFERENCE TO EGYPT OR TO THE U.S. ARAFAT, IN
HIS PRESS CONFERENCE, REFERRED TO EFFORTS TO DIVIDE THE
PALESTINIAN LEADERSHIP IN AN ATTEMPT TO DESTROY THE CAUSE
OF THE ARAB-PALESTINIAN PEOPLE. THIS, HE SAID, IS PART
OF A PLAN TO RESTORE IMPERIALIST DOMINANCE, PARTICULARLY
THAT OF THE U.S., IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

5. THE OVERALL TONE WAS POSITIVE WITH MUCH STRESS ON
FRIENDLY COOPERATION AND DEVELOPING CLOSE TIES AND
AGREEMENT ON INTERNATIONAL ISSUES. DISCUSSIONS WERE
CARRIED OUT, ACCORDING TO THE JOINT PRESS STATEMENT,
IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF FRIENDSHIP, ANTI-IMPERIALIST
SOLIDARITY AND MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING.

6. AN AGREEMENT WAS SIGNED ON MUTUAL COOPERATION FOR

1978-79. NO DETAILS WERE GIVEN ABOUT THE SUBSTANCE OF THE AGREEMENT, HOWEVER.

7. COMMENT. HONECKER IN HIS MEETING WITH ARAFAT CLEARLY UNDERScoreD GDR SUPPORT FOR THE LEADERSHIP OF THE PLO IN ITS MIDDLE EAST POLICIES WHICH SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN THE MAIN POINT OF THE VISIT. THE PUBLIC PRONOUNCEMENTS CONTAIN NO NEW POSITION OR SIGNIFICANT CHANGES OF POSITION, AT LEAST ON THE GDR SIDE. DESPITE APPARENT DIFFERENCES OF VIEWS ON SOME ASPECTS OF MIDDLE EAST POLICY, THE GDR IS MAKING A MAJOR AND SEEMINGLY SUCCESSFUL EFFORT TO

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STRENGTHEN ITS TIES WITH THE PLO.

8. AS A FOOTNOTE TO THE MEETING, WE WOULD NOTE THAT POLITBURO MEMBER GERHARD GRUENEBERG WAS THE

OFFICIAL SPOKESMAN FOR THE GDR DURING THE POLITICAL
TALKS WITH ARAFAT. UNTIL LAST YEAR GRUENEBERG
HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR MIDDLE EAST AFFAIRS WITHIN
THE POLITBURO. HOWEVER, THE LATE WERNER LAMBERZ
HAD RECENTLY TAKEN OVER MIDDLE EASTERN ALONG WITH
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AFRICAN ISSUES. WHETHER THIS WAS
DUE TO LAMBERZ' INCREASING POWER OR GRUENEBERG'S
ILLNESS IS NOT CERTAIN. IN ANY CASE, GRUENEBERG
SEEMS TO HAVE RESUMED HIS PREVIOUS RESPONSIBILITY,
AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT. END COMMENT. BOLEN

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